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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 001732

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11. (S/NF) Summary: GOR officials and outside experts told us the Cuba-Russia relationship had not significantly changed since Raul Castro became president. No Strong Preference for Raul or Fidel

12. (S/NF) The MFA's Cuba desk told us June 23, and outside experts subsequently confirmed, that Russia did not have a preference for working with Cuba or Venezuela.

13. (S/NF) Vladimir Davydov, Director of the Latin American Institute at the Russian Academy of Sciences, said that Russia perceived a different

Russian Priorities: Cuba or Venezuela?

14. (S/NF) Both MFA officials and outside experts declined to prioritize Russia's relations with Cuba and Venezuela. Russia has a longer history of working with Venezuela.

15. (S/NF) Leaders of Cuba and Venezuela have participated in high-profile visits with Russia officials, including President Medvedev. Palacio

16. (S/NF) Russia's bilateral trade with Venezuela totals more than USD 700 million, while trade with Cuba totals about USD 280 million. Davydov

Russian Military Operations in Cuba

17. (S/NF) GOR officials told us there were no plans to establish military bases in Cuba. They added that the GOR was unlikely to deploy any large-scale military units to Cuba.

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relationship was economic.

Working with Cuban Officials

18. (S/NF) When asked about their working relationship with their Cuban counterparts, GOR officials declined to comment. BEYRLE